



U.S. Immigration
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Enforcement

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News Release

OPERATION SAFEHAVEN: PENNSYLVANIA WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL SOFTWARE PIRACY CHARGE

NEW HAVEN, CT—Kevin J. O'Connor, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that Carol Szoke, 62 of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, waived indictment and pleaded guilty today before Senior United States District Judge Ellen Bree Burns in New Haven to one count of conspiracy to commit criminal copyright infringement.

According to documents filed with the court and statements made in court, Szoke was a participant in the "warez scene" – an underground online community that consists of individuals and organized groups who use the Internet to engage in the large-scale, illegal distribution of copyrighted software. In the warez scene, certain participants (known as "suppliers") are able to obtain access to copyrighted software, video games, DVD movies, and MP3 music files, often before those titles are even available to the general public. Other participants (known as "crackers") then use their technical skills to circumvent or "crack" the digital copyright protections; and yet others (known as "couriers") distribute the pirated software to various file servers on the Internet for others to access, reproduce, and further distribute.

"Stealing the intellectual property of others is no different from any other form of thievery," U.S. Attorney Kevin J. O'Connor stated. "It is a priority of this Office and the Department of Justice to protect the intellectual property rights of our nation's inventors and creators."

Szoke's plea of guilty represents a continuing effort to prosecute individuals targeted during Operation Safehaven, a 15-month investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the ICE Cyber Crimes Center, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Connecticut and the Department of Justice, Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section ("CCIPS"). Operation Safehaven culminated in April 2003 with the simultaneous execution of more than 20 search warrants nationwide, resulting in the seizure of thousands of pirated CDs and DVDs, plus dozens of computers and servers, including the largest warez site ever seized in the United States to date.

“Software piracy is theft by criminals, plain and simple,” stated Matthew J. Etre, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE in New England. “It is multibillion dollar thievery, and ICE will continue to target and dismantle those criminal organizations that abuse the Internet by facilitating and participating in this activity.”

Judge Burns has scheduled sentencing for Dec. 16, 2005, at which time Szoke faces a maximum term of imprisonment of five years and a fine of up to \$250,000.

This case was investigated by ICE and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Maria A. Kahn and Edward Chang of the District of Connecticut and Clement J. McGovern from the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section of the Department of Justice.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.